



# The Florida House of Representatives

**Chris Sprowls**  
**Speaker**

## NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release:**

March 23, 2021

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## **House Speaker Sprowls Announces Bipartisan Plan to Reduce Maternal Mortality, Ensure Healthy Babies**

*Plan Would Extend Medicaid Coverage Period for Pregnant Women  
from 2 months to 1 year Following Delivery of Baby*

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (March 23, 2021)** — Florida House Speaker Chris Sprowls, R-Palm Harbor, alongside House colleagues during a news conference today announced a plan to reduce maternal mortality rates and improve health outcomes for new mothers and infants by extending maternal Medicaid benefits from the two months in current law to a full year following delivery. The \$240 million coverage-period extension will be part of the House's Medicaid conforming bill to be noticed for a hearing this week in the Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee.

"I believe that every baby should have the opportunity to be born healthy," said Speaker Sprowls. "And for that baby to thrive, every mother needs appropriate care. We believe that providing access to post-natal coverage of up to a year after birth can significantly boost the health of the mother. And we know that healthy moms are better positioned to raise healthy babies. I am proud to commit to this vital step to help Florida's mothers during and after pregnancy and set them up on a path for long-term success."

During his November Organization Session speech, Speaker Sprowls challenged House Members to look at the data on the disparities that black women face in maternal health care and work toward a solution. Approximately 700 women die each year in the United States as a result of pregnancy or delivery complications, and one-third of maternal deaths occur in the postpartum period, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Data. Black women were about three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause as white women.

This 10-month extension will provide the time needed for mothers to access to more health care visits – including mental health assessments and additional follow-up care. The additional months of eligibility will apply to about 97,600 Florida women each year, according to the Agency for Health Care

Administration. This will fall under the normal Medicaid match provided by the federal government and require a total investment of about \$240 million, about \$92 million of which will be state funds.

Representative and Chair of the House Health & Human Services Committee, Colleen Burton, R-Lakeland, who recently led workshops on maternal health care in her committee, offered her support to the proposal.

“The post-delivery period is a particularly vulnerable time for moms, and ongoing health care is essential to a new mother and baby’s well-being,” said Chair Burton. “I am glad to stand here today among friends and colleagues to celebrate life and to support mothers.”

In Florida, several initiatives at the state and provider level adopted in recent years address the issue of maternal mortality. These efforts reduced the state’s overall maternal mortality rate by 25 percent, cut the rate for non-Hispanic Black women nearly in half, and lowered by 75% both the rate for Hispanic women and the Black-white disparity gap – making Florida a model for the country. Although Florida is trending in the right direction, more can be done to combat maternal mortality in order to keep mothers and their babies safe and healthy.

During a Tuesday press conference, the Speaker highlighted Representative Kamia Brown’s role in advocating for this change to address the disparities in maternal health care that black women face. She is the bill sponsor of HB 645, the details of which will be addressed in the House’s Medicaid conforming bill.

“This 12 month postpartum Medicaid coverage extension is critical for mothers, going leaps and bounds beyond what was offered in the past,” said Representative Kamia Brown, D-Ocoee. “This will help make certain that we are insuring and protecting mothers and babies when they need it most.”

“The Florida House movement toward extending postpartum Medicaid coverage is an important down payment to support maternal and infant health,” said Democratic Ranking Member of the Health & Human Services Committee Nick Duran, D-Miami. “Continuity of care is key to maternal health.”

Follow the progress of this plan at [www.myfloridahouse.gov](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov).

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